

Selected Poems

Also by Seten Tomh

The Good Path of Laozi (trans., 2019)

UR Poems (2021)

ardhe42 (2022)

The Chiselled Garden (2024)

Selected Poems

Seten Tomh

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For Boo Thompson (1958–2024)

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SELECTED POEMS OF SETEN TOMH

To My Unknown Father
And So Trailing Clouds of Glory Spun the Fool

THIS THAT I AM

This that I am, this karmic ambiguity,
Is what we see,
Our reality,
Not frail disposed flesh twitching on a string,
Arising out of hills of infamy,
Christ's fires burning
On distant hilltops,
Snowflakes turning
In silent cacophony
As the bells still toll shrill in Auschwitz.

It's Christmas Eve in Auschwitz.
The whole village settles down to sleep
In flannel nightgowns and eiderdowns
Festooned with swastikas and dollar signs.

We cuddle down to sleep
Our heads pressed against our edifying pillows of politics
and poetry,
Facebook and twitter,
All aflitter,
Listening to the raindrops
Pelting on the windowpane,
And think, "How sweet,
Another storm again,"
And move and murmur in our sleep of celebrity.

O man, will you ever be awake?
Or will you die having never been born,
Or knowing who has done to you

Or why,
Or even demanding to know,
Like a sick beaten cur crying and twitching in its own stench
and filth in the slough,
Each cry a new crescendo of vulgarity
In the corner of the barn
On the rough wooden floor of the dustbin of history,
Or even knowing that there is a question
Before that cat catches us (bejesus!),
Sotted, surrounded by feathers and the nests of new kittens.

What will it take
To kick us awake?
The larger the litter
The less each one seems.
O man! Emerge from your dream!

Pantomimes on a wall.
But we know what archetypes flow through these veins
Cast in the skeins
Of naked rock and crevice and claw
As we carve up our way up out of the mud and slough
To slay the pinnacles of our desire
Only to be cast back upon the burning apex of the pyramid,
Ourselves,

Wherein infinities of mirrors
Endlessly reflecting
Their own intricate assemblies,
Symmetries
And dissymmetries,
Like the interior of the diamond.
And we abide in that too, for a moment.

...

Bunny, bunny, bunny foot,
Lucky bunny, see your savoury bottom
Dashing off into the bush.
Follow you into the forest,
Lose you there, there's no way out!
What's this mist, what are those noises?
Throaty rasps bestir the night
With moans and tremors of things quixotic,
Larval, laryngeal and malformed delights,
Like cancerous women's breasts and ova of foam spat out
upon the ragged shores of flesh,
Decomposing into their tracteries,
Charcoal filaments bestudded with diamonds.

FALLING EAGLE

Light bringer, how you roam alone,
Uncommon prophet far from home,
Bright feather from beyond the stream,
Shakti consort of the sun,
Crier of the time, and spun
By infinity you careen.

To man you come, a distant rood,
Your rendezvous a sign of blood,
Reminder of a distance vast.
The sky is shaken by your path,
The past returns, the future's wrath –
O man, will your time last?

The music of the spheres seduces;
The mind of man, inane, produces
Tangential fantasies.
May the music of your harp
Go forth to seek a better heart
More able to unlock your mysteries.

I see alien flowers,
Celestial bowers,
Growing through cracked tiles;
Still absent builders,
Their skill bewilders,
Blowing through empty aisles.

ROBBIE'S STOOL

“She has nowhere to go,”
My mother said,
In the door of her mother’s house.

Robbie, curled up beside the fire,
Sat like a cat
Dying of TB.

I stood there then,
Gazing into the room,
A child in a house of ghosts.

She did not speak, I could not go near –
Like a fragile doll on a shelf,
Like a picture on a wall.

“She reads playing cards,”
My mother said.
She could not read for me.

I never saw her twice.
There was no rite.
She had no friends to come.

She served her
Day and night,
Living in the little room beneath the stairs,

And when it was time,
She sat on a stool

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By the fire in my mother's mother's house.

And when she was gone
Stool put away,
They never mentioned her again.

THE FACES IN THE ROCKS

The faces in the rocks
Gaze at me,
Intent.
They ask
“Who are you?
Where have you come from?
We’ve been waiting here
Forever,
At last you come
To our home.”
Their rough faces
Twisted in the rocks,
Each one individual,
Each one a mystery,
Each one holy.
I wish I could know them
But they are mute,
Only their faces speak truth,
Archaic faces
Twisted by time
Lost in the creepers and the vines
By the river that murmurs
Beneath the city.
I wonder, who else has come
To sit in silent witness
Beneath the flashing leaves
And hum of the cicadas
In the ravine?
I invite others to see, but no one comes.
The city is too close, its business

Infinitely distracting.
But I return
Again and again
Because I realize that only I will come
To witness their testimony.
It is a mission I have.
And if I die
In this place
I wish
That I too may join their company,
The stone faces that do not speak.
A lone bird sings its song.

DZOGCHEN

I sit cross-legged.
A world unfolds itself
Concealed beneath a fallen tree.
In the midst of the valley
A jade stupa,
Surrounded by three great boulders –
Guardians.
I sit cross-legged
Upon a distant peak,
Gazing down
Into the valley,
The murmur of water my mantra.
A world reveals itself
Amidst the bric-a-brac.
Worlds within worlds.
The soft green glow
Of the stupa
Enthrals me.

SITTING

In each moment
Essence strikes,
Immaculate.

Suspended like the butterfly
In midair.
Unspoken.

The humming bird too
Flies poised
Imbibing the mysterious nectar.

STILL LIFE

The world only gives herself up to those who do not desire her.

I watch the fruit
ripening in the sun.
I watch it turn to pulp,
rotten with sensuality.
If I were attracted to the fruit
I would suffer.
If I were not attracted,
I would be indifferent.
But I see the fruit as it is,
beautiful in the first glint
of the morning light.
The faint fragrance of rot
stings the sky.
The fruit flies dance
like dakinis.

SECRET

One day this insect
Will be a butterfly
Sitting on a rock
In the sun-drenched clearing,
Thailand's forests
Far away.
I hear the mighty bellows of the bull elephant.
He comes close.
I fly away.
Was it you, or not?
I long for it to be so.

AWAKENING

An ocean of nectar is suffering.
Delight in the wondrous yellow fog,
The scarlet pagoda emblazoned by the sun.
The great bell standing there.
And the Buddha there,
Standing before the bell.

THE LONELINESS OF THE DALAI LAMA

My birth, taken,
Surprised by the light,
The caravan carries me away
Into the night.
I cannot see
Where it might end,
But I remember
Where it began.
The flowers of my flesh
Cover the countryside.
Buried deep,
Their roots abide.
This candle flame,
Alone in name,
It is my shame
To carry.
I dare not tarry.
I shall not stagger
Beneath two destinies.
For I am free.

THE SOURCE THAT IS THE POEM

The poem that arises in the mind
Is not the poem that is contrived
Although the poem that is contrived
Also arises in the mind.

The poem that arises in the mind
Is not the poem of sense
Although the poem of sense
Also arises in the mind.

The poem that arises in the mind
Is not the poem of mind
Although the poem of mind
Also arises in the mind.

The mind that arises in the poem
Is not contrived of mind
Although the mind that is contrived
Also arises in the poem.

LITERARY ENCOUNTER

“No one digs poems no more”
He said, loitering against the door.
I did not care. I liked his stare,
Standing lean beside the door.
“So what?” I said, surprised
At the throaty rasp of my voice.
“What do I care what others say?
“My voice alone at close of day,
“Like the muezzin's call to prayer,
“Fulfil itself in its own air.”
He smiled then, his perfect teeth
Like a jackal's grin, his lips thin
And meet, as he came into my room.

SIMON

For Simon G.

Eight years I waited for you
To grow into my light.
Was it really eight? It seemed
No time at all had passed
When first you came to me,
And spoke the sacred words
Which quicken love.
But your brief blossom burst
In excess of delight.
How could it flower when so much time had passed
Between our lies?
Clung we to dream,
Desperate to entice,
But your ripe blossom
Fell into the night.
And I, forlorn, forsaken,
Usurer and used,
Sought refuge in the waste of endless white,
Where nothing living goes.
There I abide alone
And shall reside
Till death intrude
Its healing balm
Forgetfulness,
And the holy root
Renews our tryst
In some new soil
Insatiate.

THE SEX LIFE OF THE OCTOPUS

Seven hundred million years old
Going on three,
The parrot-beaked mollusk,
Tooth-tongued,
Flows forth from his den
Of rocks and beer bottles
On his last hunt.

The fifty pound
Eight-foot octopus
Seeks to do his duty.
His crazy pupil
Scans the horizontal.

Solitary cannibal,
When you find her you will be
The perfect gentleman,
Offering her your arm
For later use.

A thousand suckers
Taste-touch-tongue her skin-blood-muscle
Enveloped in eight rope-like arms,
Arms wrapped in arms
With quarter-ton eros.

Not given to conversation nor longevity,
Your duty done, you die,
In a model of amorous and familial efficiency.

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Now she, once more alone,
Fasts for her children,
Gently blows across
Her precious eggs
To keep them bright and clean as a woven string of pearls.
In a few months
Her pinprick offspring will dye the tide.

DZOGCHEN¹

When the wild leaves shelter the babe in spring,
Raising their vacuous arpeggios,
This chorus is the hevajra² of her song,
And resonates with the wild chimes,
Green starlight of Sherpa Palace.³
She opens her double eyes and looking into space turns to
contemplate
The peaks and turbulences afar,
Stares at yakshinis⁴ boiling with Ch'ang Sing.⁵
Woven in the multitudinous womb,
Complete and compact,
Even as the stone shot by the bow of Alexander,⁶
Even as the hard gems of sunrise
Of Pacific isles rise,
Are faced, holds contemplation of all the years she has lived.
She and her babe clench hands in tranquility
As she aims her mind deep into the stars.

¹ Tib. "Great Perfection" or "Great Completion," a.k.a. "utmost yoga" (atiyoga), is the highest teaching of Tibetan Buddhism, which aims at discovering and continuing in the ultimate ground of being, which is emptiness, the feminine principle.

² Tib. "indestructible joy."

³ Sherpa Palace or Castle, Bigu, Nepal.

⁴ Nature spirits associated with Indian sacred groves.

⁵ Ancient Chinese warrior society. Hence, warrior energy.

⁶ Alexander the Great invaded India in 327 BCE.

SONG OF PANCASIKHA⁷

O girl long of thigh,
Possess me with your limpid eye,
Let me lose myself in your embrace,
O maid.
I shall emblaze
This yearning spark
To perfect flaming.
All beings arise,
Delighting in the curls of her hair,
And give gifts to the saints.

⁷ This poem is a loose translation from the “Song of Pancasikha” in the Pali Canon (*Digha Nikaya*, 21.1.5).

A KA DUA⁸

O mighty all-souled one
Among the beings below:
But lo!
An evil will strive.
Greetings our God of Might
Towering over Earth,
King of all his foes;
Lighten to us your presence
Until we are at rest:
Reveal thyself before we toil.
Dost you rule still, lord?
So arise, honorable serpent,
Free the lusty birds from thy web.
O glorious all-souled one,
Darker than all at large:
Do what thou wilt; all thy half-evil brethren
No rebellion find, for you stand above!
Yet pity them I here pray,
Suffer them the same while I still speak.

⁸ Eg. "O high, sublime, or exalted one!" the opening words of the stele of Ankh-ef-na-khonsu, Theban priest, ca. 725 BCE, who inspired the thelemic cultus of Aleister Crowley.

WEDDING SONG

“The irrevocable annihilation of christian civilization is taking shape with carnivorous flowers of volcanic thought” Philip Lamantia

O Pan!⁹ I am a man!
Freedom or sharp torture
Over the volcano-dark sea
From the skin-bare toilsome countryside,
From the road of bells and gongs,
Over the bliss and languid color
Of golden Tara,¹⁰ freedom or sharp torture —
Birth or death or warmth and dark
Impaled in eternity. O Pan! Io Pan! Io Pan Pan!
I am Father, I am Mother:¹¹
Mother, for thy labors
While another begat
Lilith!¹² Immaculate, radiant goddess,
Dew of alabaster! Set
The august patterns of space,
Of hours, days and years,
That glowing carpentry
In numbers ripest never in duration!
Save thy most great height,
Listen, hear thy cleft jaws!

⁹ Ancient Greek god of forests, pastures, flocks, and shepherds, represented with the head, chest, and arms of a man and the legs and sometimes the horns and ears of a goat, cognate with Bacchus, Dionysus, and Jesus, self-identical with “the All.”

¹⁰ Historic seat of the the ancient Irish kings. Also a Tantric goddess, a sea goddess in Polynesian mythology, and Northern English “goodbye, farewell.”

¹¹ Father-Mother Tantra emphasizes the non-duality of method and wisdom.

¹² In Jewish mythology, Adam’s first wife, before Eve was created, and a female demon dwelling in deserted places.

Dew on hard stone heard
Mill-like through ages,
Through whom mountains shape,
Mineral sands smooth,
Calve¹³ fires gleaming,
The rings of men ring!
O Pan! Io Pan!
Io Pan! Io Pan Pan! I am
And not another! O Pan! Io Pan Pan!
Io Pan! O Pan! Io Pan Pan Pan Pan Pan Pan Pan,
Ever chaste, neither here nor there,
Tending the buds on immortal trees!
O Pan! Io Pan! Io Pan Pan Pan Pan Pan, Pan,
Son of *Péhusōn*,¹⁴ son of Tharot,¹⁵
I knew thee thirty-three years¹⁶ —
Now I will say bye to you.
You know me.

¹³ Lit. “to give birth or separate.”

¹⁴ Proto-Indo-European pastoral deity.

¹⁵ Tarot (Hindi), referring probably to Atu XV. The Devil, synthesizing the solar-martial energy (5 = 6) that is the realization of the True Self.

¹⁶ The traditional age at which Christ was crucified, among many other meanings.

LA GAUCHE¹⁷ (THE LEFT EYE OF AIWAZ¹⁸)

*Dedicated to Leah Hirsig (1883-1975)*¹⁹

groundward rockbound
the water's downrush
breaks
rainbowlike
into the witch's hole
winds circlewise
gyral torrential biting
sweeps away
the gate
the spate
that separates
nothing remains
all things bring discs of rings
blue, dazzling eyes
where
sing flowers of radiant eternity
in infinite skies
above the solar wheel shines

¹⁷ Fr. 'left.'

¹⁸ Turkish proper name (lit. 'substitute'), name of a "preterhuman intelligence" which dictated the Book of the Law to Aleister Crowley in April 1904.

¹⁹ Swiss-American woman who became the "scarlet woman" of Aleister Crowley between 1919 and 1924. This poem is inspired by a vision experienced by Leah at the Abbey of Thelema, Cefalu in 1920.

ON A POEM BY SU SHI²⁰

Until I hear the sweet tales in the evening,
Smile from the dull moon to guide me in time,
Questions to ponder:
Is our continuous separation from each other a tribute to human
pride, strength and belief?
Is the moon common for every time and place?
When a parent separates, does he come back after suffering
sadness?
Are suns ever stripped of their lights and tints?

²⁰ Su Shi (1037–1101) was a Chinese scholar-official, active as a poet, essayist, calligrapher, during the Song dynasty. He is regarded as one of the most accomplished figures in classical Chinese literature, and the “preeminent personality of the 11th century.” The poem referred to is probably the “Prelude to Water Melody” (水调歌头), by Su Shi, famously sung by Wong Fei.

DASEIN²¹

A granite stone cube buried in a sandy beach towers against the plain expanse of blue sky. Or is it merely infinitesimal in a world of stars? Perspective blushes the imagination. the universe crushes all experiences to sand, even a granite stone cube or an “I.” We capitalize the term, we speak of “an I.” I ruminate upon a granite stone cube, infinitesimal in a world of stars, being crushed to sand, and I understand, perceiving meaning in an arbitrary act that beggars the imagination against the plain expanse of blue sky. What artifice is this ant tracing, of what origin and for what posterity? Being answers naught. the mystic knows naught. The mystic seeks in some vain yet vital cave of the heart the answer to the riddle that he himself poses, constructing spider’s webs of language, himself the spider and the prey. He sucks himself dry in his chimerical pursuits, only to discover the ashes of naught, his webs tracteries of charcoal. But he who neither knows nor speaks dwells in the perfect emptiness of mind that is bliss. That bliss is present even now. It is the presence of sentience, the vacuity of being, the being of mind, the mind of bliss; sentience, devoid of self or thought, being purely present to its own-being²² in perfect simplicity of being itself.

²¹ Ger. “being there:” or “presence,” which Heidegger used to refer to the mode of being peculiar to human beings.

²² ²² Skt. *svabhava* ‘self-becoming.’ Intrinsic nature of beings; essence; Buddha nature.

DRUNKEN POETS

Why, for certain, so stricken?
Because the intoxicated load dies tonight.
It comes down from above: the rain of drunken darkness,
A pestilence borne by souls like sacks wet with tears,
And stories couched in peace that doom;
The longing they stir, their dancing heights that tilt away.
Why, for certain, so stricken,
When the heart must gnash at the truth they've told?
Not bawling, blood boiled
In our mouths, as we kiss this sleeping skin
For a taste of heaven, reeking with peace beneath,
Blood haunted by nightmares in quiet descent,
Or locked in quiet tension as thoughts rush toward us.
Not bawling, blood froze in body hot with tears,
Blood reamed in the fist of loneliness.
Not bawling, blood poisoned
To hear only our music dumb,
And this hard sorrow which is denied our glimpse.
Why, for certain, so stricken,
As tears soak the dreams, in trances those who live
Discover ourselves shut like locks of flesh twisted in fear,
Half blinding or shedding light so bitter,
And dreams whose memories
Are swallowed by shadows in death's cry;
Caught here in tears and bleeding, left unable
To breathe in holy dreams, with no way
To escape but out a window into wet night.
If any suffering ever gave way
To self-examination of choice, the force died
Wringing in drunk reason and blurred flesh,
When drunk poets gave flesh the words of death
And left compassion itself dispirited, with hands trembling:
Inspiration, wisdom, fire, liquid sorrow, all rotted from lack;

Fainting, left disabused
Of sensual delights, a solitary bank,
Mushy and blank as the night, patient
In final repose, fading as time unfolds.
Because, in devotion, we broke only holes
For a death dream like stars in holes, painted hearts like holes in
night,
For pale dreams wandering out of darkness and suffering to touch
light —
A memory lost forever, weeping in dawn light —
A sweet curse broken when drunken tongues are mad.
Ours is a cursed fate. Because we have drunk
Doomed souls, blighted souls, our stones made to leap
And brood upon gloom, tangled fields evasive,
We wake in uneasy guilt haunted, whatever way.
Hope blinds it. It chills it, it plunges deeper into dullness,
Tempting it for those unlucky hearts to shriek into the edge of
darkness,
Like worms writhing in the earth, frightened because in our woe,
we lack mercy.
For such truths give only a grim smile to pain,
And if only we knew that the giver lives like a carpenter's nail
That picks apart souls slowly in scorn's wind,
We might fix on it fearfully and easily. Even in its hate, fear
Bears witnesses towards repaying our loneliness, as if
A god ruled truly, which doesn't grant life,
Nor offer death — which can only be given — that would quench
this burning doom,
That feeds us for songless mornings
And complains at answering our thoughts, "oh God" in an
irresistible voice.
It sings of blind tongues that lie in stone,
The cries of walled hurtlers in earth cages, lifted into air like
whispers.
Only to us trapped in body, thrusting
In painful trance into lingering, longing to call

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There to creation strange-like gods what seem like God in
thought.
To breathe, speak, rise of the plain to continue living,
Thickened flesh obeys sunless trees — and worse.
Ours is a bitter death-long, deep-going suffering with pain
streaming through blood;
It meets in the silent glimmers as at the truth, admitting its guilt
But burning with longing it seems, slipping deeper as we slip
away.
“Oh God,” I long for more bloodsick ears screaming into eternity.
For this sorrow rides ahead as one ill to our happy days,
A mingling of truth and sadness surely futile, dulling ever.
Never was there compassion preserved in this darkness,
Unless it remained latent in our fair, hateful voices.
That soft pity I long for never felt
Any sorrow, not even that of dying upon a cross
In thirst like the ghosts of saints bleeding half-dead in silent
prayer.
Now, where lies the brilliance, the purity of compassion?
This haunted world, this mocking war-time, time evil in
compassion as in all,
They curse lives changed from art to pity, each life ill-scorned,
The pits of drink, culture to sacred hurtling
over mountains as, held into pride, their joy, eyes torn and
bleeding,
Their harm is to taste a root with strange taste, searching ever.

THE OLD CAT

His range of view, restricted by the fence,
grown so wary that he cannot think
a world beyond exists: intense
the stench of flowers from which he shrinks.

Stirring in his sleep, over and over,
murmuring, quivering, breathing fast,
he dreams an ancient dream of endless clover,
a primal world of endless grass.

Eyelids flutter and he half awakes,
strange images stir and blend together,
fellow beasts through the forest break,
only to vanish as they gather.

LOST DOG

Sometimes I pray I'll see him in the park —
the one I love as he loves me — but no one hears my bark,
no one comes to pick me up and take me home.
It sounds so nice — someone to take me home —
like those in the park near where I stay,
playing, running, jumping, then go away.
Today I found a bone and ran along the path
by the bench where others stop and sit
hoping he would greet me and end my roam,
But time wears on and darkness wan
descends again upon the town, and I
find a place to curl up and chew my bone —
To let me come into their life,
to warm me by their hearth,
and let me creep into their bed to sleep —
Oh! but the path is long and winding —
I'll know him when he finds me, and I find him —
Perhaps beyond the next rise.

TRIPTYCH

1

At a table in an inn
an old Chinese man
brush poised

2

Silent but seeing
the tabby cat stares
at his master

3

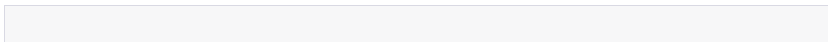
In the distance a dog barks
lost on the muddy road — a man in the snow
makes his way home

MANCAT

I meow, playful, nuzzle while you nap,
curled up, whisper into your ears,
twitching, tail swishing,
lap cat, tomcat, wildcat, tabbycat,
fat cat, black cat, white cat. Sphinx,
riddle me your riddle or will you rouse,
flounce me for my importunity,
renounce our consonance and pounce,
only to discover your error and retract your claws,
paws kneading, purring, belly up,
eyes winking, big, blinking,
gazing at me wondering,
bewitching me like a lover,
then saunter to the litterbox to crap.

THE ANIMAL TRAINER

The great beast comes,
It's brawny breast
Shaping the body's breathing,
The clicker's cue engendering habit,
Enriching the training,
The lure everything, bridging
The abysm, targeting the mind's gap,
Balanced on the precipice of misunderstanding, control,
The demented laughter of the brawlsh crowd, watching,
Jeering at the prospect of immolation,
The murder of innocence —
Man the preeminent beast,
The age of man, nature's end,
Himself binding and bound
By the great clicker, money,
The trick of willing obedience.



SONNENIZIO ON A LINE FROM ALEISTER CROWLEY

With vivid lust annihilate the world,
itself nothing, as the Buddha teaches;
but nihilism palls, its disciples pale,
meditating on the mantra of death,
with anemic rancour, dissecting life
which too annihilates itself; the elf
inaugurates, invigorates itself,
initiates self, annihilating
the annihilator, nimiety.
Whither then this nihilistic traitor,
nihil animated by the hanker
for ixnay, nay, nil? Yea, stay the way,
lifting the negligee of nepenthe,
only to unclothe the living banshee.

NEW SALEM

Dedicated to King Charles III

Written on the Occasion of His Coronation

Ancient shadows shoot across the sky,
Divinity their destiny.
Time stands still, as though in awe, my
Footsteps fighting the will to flee,
I bewildered by the melee
As arrows whisper in the air
To their inevitable end.

Walking now upon the site, it
Unfolds itself before my sight,
Eyes untroubled by its mystery —
My mind a mountain of delight,
Green now the land that lies beneath.

AFTER ODIN

*Nine days he hang' pa de rütless tree;
For ill wis da folk, in' gūd wis he.
A blüdy mael wis in his side —
Made wi' a lance — 'at wid na hide.
Nine lang nichts, i' de nippin rime,
Hang he dare wi' his naeked limb.
Some dey leuch;
Bid idders gret.*

lover of ecstasy and trance
with the single, piercing eye
shall I pluck one eye for wisdom?
shall I drink deep from the well
of the mead of poetry?
does my eye offend thee, caretaker?
shall ye cast me from the garden?
shall ye sentence me to strife?

stone me if it be thy will
for I have hung upon the winding tree
for nine long days and nights
under the misty moon
I have starved myself nigh death
sacrificing myself to myself
I shall come down from the tree
bearing the words of wisdom
that conceal the secrets of life
I shall seduce Adam with the pomegranate
effeminate shaman
with the single, piercing eye
and together we shall cry aloud the joy
that is thy bane

and penetrate the mystery
that is thy fall

TO MY UNKNOWN FATHER

*"Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law / My services are bound.
Wherefore should I / Stand in the plague of custom, and permit /
The curiosity of nations to deprive me, / For that I am some
twelve or fourteen moonshines / Lag of a brother? Why bastard?
Wherefore base?" Shakespeare, King Lear*

I am not you, my father true, who freed
my mother in her throe, redeemed by love.
I am not your fetish child, sworn to prove
your patrimony, not your rotting seed,
nor your winning steed, with mane resplendent,
not your blood, burning with rapacity,
nor the mirror of your audacity.
I am the soul of self-will, transcendent,
I am the loveless lover of life's wallow.
I am the secret self you never knew,
I am the beast that runs the valley through,
I am the priest that burns with divine sorrow.
I am myself and thus by all despised,
I am born naked in a world of lies.

AND SO TRAILING CLOUDS OF GLORY SPUN THE FOOL

And so trailing clouds of Glory spun the Fool
In worlds of torment he laughed and laughed!
And the Stars too laughed in their blue blanket,
Making passionate love in the oblivious Night.

Down he came, down he came, whirling and whirling,
Down the tether stretched 'twixt earth and moon,
And the crowds they wondered as he whirled,
Laughing and laughing in the solar ray.

And the crowds they gathered and made passionate love
Under the brilliant summer sun
And the Fool laughed and he played his pipe,
And all fell asleep, one by one.

In the streets they lay, faces amazing,
Filled with a joy that was never seen,
And when they awoke the memory was real,
But the Fool and his pipe had returned to the moon.

And so they cried, they sent up a wail,
All through the oblivious Night they cried,
But all their answer was a splendid Silence,
And the wonderful memory of what had been.